

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

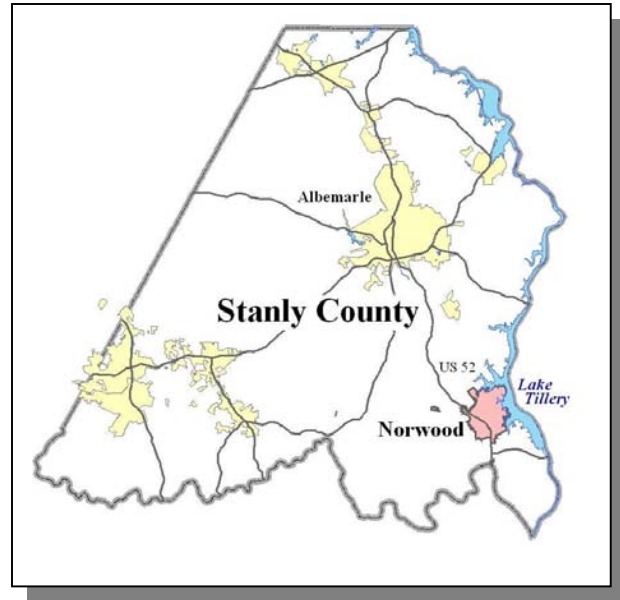
Part 2:

CURRENT CONDITIONS, NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

Section 4: Existing Conditions and Trends

1. CONDITIONS AND TRENDS IN GENERAL

The **Town of Norwood** is a small rural community in southeast Stanly County along the Yadkin-Pee Dee River in North Carolina, roughly 10 miles south of the City of Albemarle. It is situated on west side of Lake Tillery, just north of Rocky River. Most of the terrain is somewhat hilly, with its highest point rising dramatically from the lake at the Town's northeast corner. The physical conditions and layout of the Town, including all existing pedestrian facilities described in this section, are shown on the **Existing Conditions Map** at the end of Part 2.



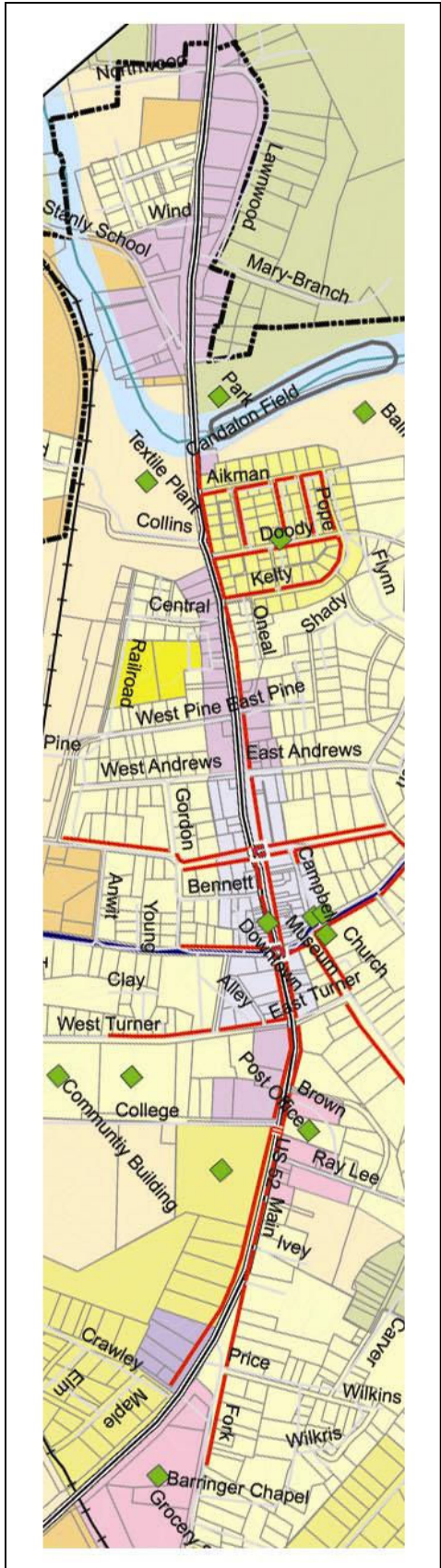
Norwood currently has much to offer anyone wishing to live a pedestrian-oriented lifestyle. Its compact, small-town core features many stores, restaurants, schools, churches, various services and residences within convenient walking distance of each other.

The **population** of Norwood in recent years has been slowly decreasing, dropping almost 3% in the 1990s. Between the years 2000 and 2004 it declined nearly 2%, compared to Stanly County's overall population increase of 1.4% in that time. Currently the population stands at 2810. About 25% of Norwood's residents are under the age of eighteen, and 15% are 65 or older.

The recent decline in the Town's population is primarily due to local economic circumstances. Some of the major **employment centers** within the Town have now closed, including Norwood Yarn Sales which, until recently, employed 262 workers. However, Norwood still has major employment opportunities including the Michelin plant, located just north of the Town, and various manufacturing, retail, accommodation and food services.

Despite the array of employment opportunities within the town, Norwood serves largely as a residential "bedroom" community for **commuters**. Of the total approximately 2800 daily commuters in Norwood and the vicinity, only about half that number work in the Norwood area, while over 840 commute to Albemarle, roughly 150 to Anson County (with most of those to the Premier Fibers Inc. plant south of Ansonville), about 120 to Charlotte, 110 to Locust, 95 to Oakboro, about 80 to the New London area, 70 to Concord, 65 to Troy, and about 45 to Union County.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN



Downtown Norwood's **Main Street** is US Highway 52. This street has become essentially the central spine of the Town. The majority of pedestrian traffic is concentrated within a few blocks of this street. The majority of small businesses that attract walking traffic are all within this same area.

Along this central spine one can shop for clothing or furniture, pharmaceuticals or medical supplies, auto parts or jewelry. A person on foot can find electronics, flowers, feed and seed, army surplus goods, stinginglass, knickknacks, or adult beverages. One can enjoy a variety of casual dining experiences or fast food, or walk to the park, to church, to school, or to the library. While getting a car repaired (or a refrigerator), one can visit a gym, a museum, buy insurance, get a haircut or a hairstyling, mail a letter, explore rental properties, do some banking, or buy a gift. One can see an accountant, a broker, a police officer, a real-estate agent or a mortician, and meet neighbors along the way.

Overall, **residential development** in Norwood is occurring at a slow rate in comparison to surrounding lake areas, primarily due to a lack of employment opportunities. The majority of recent residential development in Norwood comes by way of lake property resales to residents of neighboring counties, who tear down or add onto existing homes.

Existing residential **street patterns** and properties adjacent to Main Street are arranged in a loosely grided form. Further out from the spine toward the Lake, street patterns generally become less connected and respond more to topography and the Lake frontage. Here blocks tend to be longer and present fewer choices of path to the pedestrian.

There are a number of large tracts in Norwood that are prime for redevelopment. Were these lands to be developed in **Traditional Neighborhood Development** patterns (TND), they would tend to

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

fit in well with the Town's existing form and street network. TND would support increased commercial growth within the Town limits, which would help Norwood become an even more walkable community. The tendency for this TND pattern to emerge, however, is offset by the fact that, were new development ventures to come to the Norwood area, there is little pressure *not* to develop outside of the Town's current corporate limits or ETJ. Such sprawling patterns of growth inevitably lead to strip-type development that would, in the long run, prove auto-dependent and not support the pedestrian vision the Town has articulated.

For these larger tracts in Norwood, Lake Tillery has the potential to serve as a powerful draw for additional residential development. Across the Lake in Montgomery County, a very large residential development is currently underway including 1200 new homes in a golf course community.

Sidewalks line the northeast side of Main Street, from Darrell Almond Community Park to Barringer Chapel Road at the Food Lion store. On the southwest side, they run from the the Movie Gallery in the commercial center near Crawley Road to Advance Auto Parts between West Whitley and West Andrews Street. Certain cross streets extend this network into the adjacent neighborhoods. These include Whitley, Pee Dee, West Turner, Anson, and Allenton. An isolated run of sidewalk also lines a portin of North Kendall at Whitley. The area most intensely served by sidewalks is the Mill Village, located adjacent to the Park and across Main Street from the Joan Fabrics mill.

The Town has no record of when its sidewalks were installed, though the majority remain in fairly good condition. Typical sidewalks in Norwood are 4 feet wide with an adjacent grass strip of 4 feet. Along Main Street between Whitley and Anson, paved sidewalks conditions are more generous, widening to about eight feet. Here, in front of businesses, the sidewalk directly abuts the street and offers some occasional pedestrian enhancements such as awnings and large store windows. Sidewalks throughout the Town vary in maintainence and compliance with current ADA standards.

Crosswalks are currently located at three strategic locations in Town, all along Main Street. Two of these are at the primary intersections of Whitley Street and Anson Avenue. The third crosses South Main Street between College and Ray Lee at Norwood Elementary School. The Whitley and Anson intersections also feature the only traffic lights in Town. All crosswalks are prominently striped and feature signs to warn drivers of pedestrian activity.



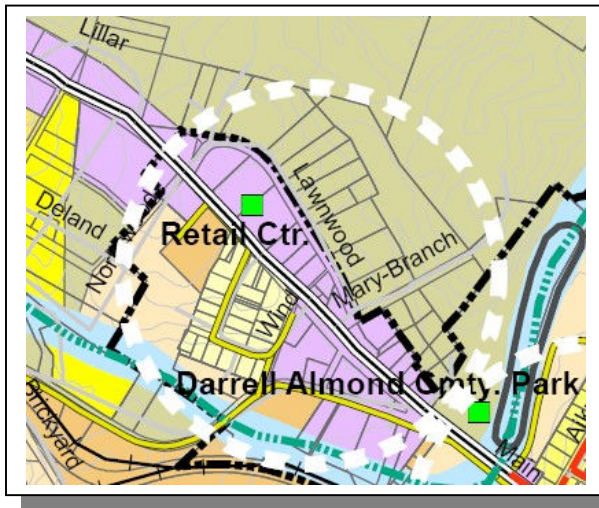
Intersection of Main Street and Anson Avenue

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

As for formal **trails**, there is only the closed loop in Darrell Almond Community Park. But creek runs, such as Cedar Creek, Big Cedar Creek, Little Cedar Creek, in addition to other shorter runs (see **Existing Conditions Map** at the end of Part 2) could provide excellent opportunities for trail corridors, particularly along existing sanitary sewer easements.

2. ORIGIN-DESTINATION POINTS

Many of the more popular destination points within Norwood are located along Main Street, and most within convenient walking distance of other popular destination points. This central spine runs a distance of approximately 2.5 miles from one end of Town to the other. Considering that an average pedestrian can comfortably walk a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in approximately ten minutes, the spine and its various destination points divide fairly neatly into five easily walkable districts, each with a diameter of $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. These five districts are listed below with some of their primary destination points (refer to the **Existing Conditions Map** at the end of Part 2).

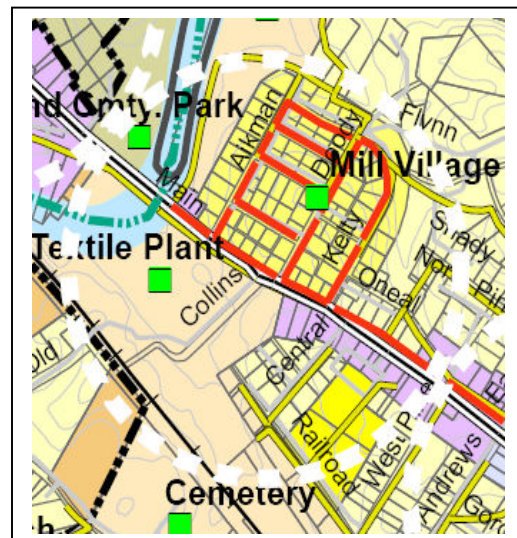


Northwest District

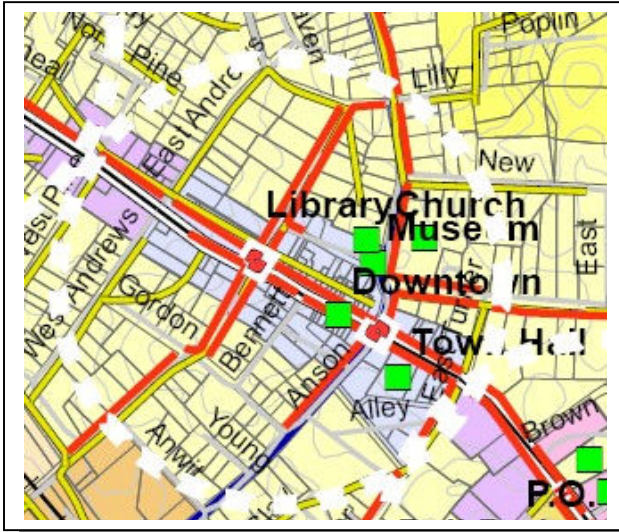
This ten-minute walk along Highway 52 stretches from the Town limits near Northwood Drive to the intersection of Stanly School Road. It is primarily a highway business-oriented district but contains residential and manufacturing zones. In this District, Cedar Creek crosses under Stanly School Road.

Park District

Traveling southeastward, Highway 52 crosses Cedar Creek. The Creek changes course as it heads toward Lake Tillery through **Darrell Almond Community Park**. In the Park, on the northeast side of the Creek, are the pond and its encompassing paved walking trail. A wooden bridge connects this side to the ball field on the southwest side. Just beyond is a dense residential neighborhood known as **Mill Village**. Many of its original residents worked in the textile factory across the street. This plant has recently closed.



NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

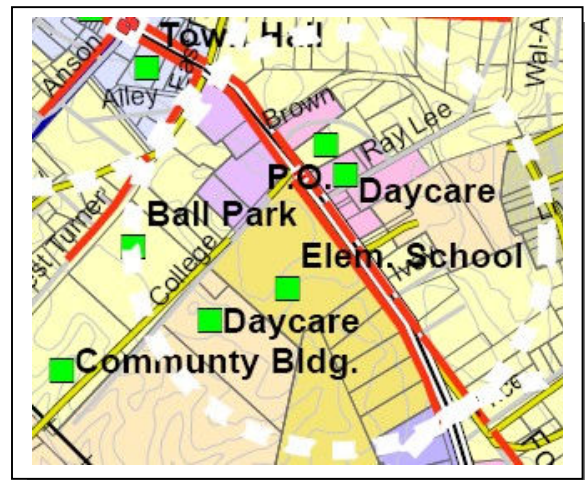


Central Business District

Norwood's "downtown" has its own Central Business zoning designation, allowing businesses to accommodate pedestrians by locating directly along the sidewalk with no setbacks. Concentrated in this area, one can find a plethora of businesses, restaurants and services, along with **Norwood Library, Norwood Museum and Visitors Center, Town Hall**, the County College extension, churches and residential neighborhoods

School District

Main Street continues with a concentration of important destinations including the **Post Office**, medical offices, daycare centers and other businesses, a ballpark, residences, and **Norwood Elementary School**. Norwood's **Community Center** lies just outside the ¼ mile radius of this district.



Southeast District

At the south side of Town, Norwood's main road splits into Highway 52 and Fork Road. The Town's primary **grocery store** and shopping center are nestled in between these roads. Other businesses are located across Highway 52, and residential neighborhoods are situated on either side of the fork. There is also a cemetery across Fork Road.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

In addition to those within these five central districts, other popular destinations include:

- Canal Park on Lake Tillery
- Lake access point off Nicks Road and other potential Lake access points
- The Marina
- The VFW
- Various churches and cemeteries
- The Vinyard

3. SPECIFIC PEDESTRIAN BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS

Norwood is a small town with generally quiet streets, many lined with sidewalks, in neighborhoods within reasonable walkable distances of the downtown area. However, a number of unsafe or uninviting conditions exist for pedestrians within the Town.

Highway 52 connects the City of Albemarle south to Wadesboro and eventually to the Atlantic Coast. This highway, which effectively bisects the Town, supports a high volume of automobile and heavy trucking traffic. Main Street, being a segment of this highway, sees an average of about 900 trucks per day. According to residents, many vehicles using NC 52 travel at excessive speeds and do not defer to pedestrians. Currently, no bypass is indicated for thru traffic traveling along this highway through Town. Since 1990, NCDOT has received eight reports of vehicular crashes involving pedestrians. Six of those involved bodily injuries, including injuries that were permanently disabling. As traffic continues to increase along NC 52, the potential for such accidents also increases. Though accidents may occur at any point, there are areas on Main Street where pedestrians feel especially unsafe:

1. **Intersection of Highway 52 and Fork Road** – These two roads join at a sharply acute angle, so visibility is hindered for merging traffic. This is also the point where the posted speed limit suddenly drops from 55 mph to 35 mph. This intersection also serves as a turn around point for vehicles traveling southward but want to head back into Town, such as Elementary School commute traffic. Pedestrians frequent this intersection, including school children. Some warning signage is posted, but conditions reportedly still feel very unsafe.



Highway 52 at Fork Road, heading north

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

2. **Darrell Almond Community Park** – The pedestrian connection along Main Street effectively ends at Cedar Creek. The sidewalk along the northeast side terminates at the Park, and the shoulder narrows to inches as the road passes over the culvert, leaving no room for pedestrians. This popular location attracts people on foot and in cars. In order to avoid conflicts and accommodate both, adequate pedestrian connections, particularly from Main Street but also from surrounding neighborhoods, need to be established.
3. Only two **traffic lights** currently exist within the Town, these being at the intersections of Main at Anson and Main at Whitley. Additional opportunities to safely cross Highway 52 are needed.
4. **Sidewalk conditions** along North Main Street vary. They are often degraded in areas where frequent curb cuts and driveways serve business properties. Portions of these sidewalks fade to the point of becoming indistinguishable from the crossing driveways and adjacent parking spaces. Though the pedestrian still has a hard surface to walk in these situations, the visual cue to drivers that they are crossing a pedestrian way is totally obscured.



“Sidewalk fade”

Access to Lake Tillery suffers from both a lack of public access points along the shoreline, and a complete lack of sidewalks and trails to the shoreline. Allenton Street provides the most direct connection from the Central Business District and the Elementary School District to the Lake, toward Canal Park. A portion of Allenton features sidewalk on one side but only for a distance of about 4/10 of a mile. This street and the Lake neighborhood it serve sees a great deal of pedestrian use, but many citizens say they are reluctant to walk on it where there is no sidewalk. As the “Gateway to Lake Tillery”, access to the Lake should rank highly among Norwood’s pedestrian concerns.

Lighting conditions are repeatedly cited as inadequate about Town. The existing “antique” lights lining Main Street add illumination and charm to the Central Business District, but throughout the rest of Town, lighting is described as “hit and miss”. Kendell, Pee Dee, Allenton, Turner Street and the Lake shore are reportedly in dire need of better lighting.

West Whitley Street connects Main Street to North Kendall Street. A half mile of sidewalk length runs along North Kendall from Anson Avenue to Lee Road, with an additional section running southwest along Whitley for 1/10 of a mile. This portion of sidewalk is separated from the Town’s main sidewalk network.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

4. GENERAL ANTI-PEDESTRIAN CONDITIONS:

- Heavy traffic along Highway 52 makes Main Street unsafe for pedestrians.
- The extent and number of existing sidewalks, crosswalks are insufficient to meet current needs. Many sidewalks are also in need of repair.
- Aside from the circular trail at Darrell Almond Community Park, there is no trail system in Norwood, despite the presence of creeks that lead to desirable destination points, such as Darrell Almond Park, the Community Building, and various Lake Tillery access points.
- Long straight roads through Town encourage speeding.
- Many existing sidewalks are inadequately lit.
- New developments tend toward segregated land uses, putting residences farther away and out of convenient walking distance from retail and commercial services.
- Primary streets generally lack street trees.
- Insufficient pedestrian warnings are present for drivers.



NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Section 5: Current Policies, Plans and Programs

1. Policies, Plans and Ordinances

Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations

Norwood's Official Zoning Ordinance is the most binding legal document affecting the contemporary form of the Town and continuing development patterns. The degree to which Norwood will become an increasingly pedestrian-friendly town – with all the benefits thereof – will depend upon the continuing development of this document and the Town's Subdivision Regulations. As it is, these documents contain a number of sections that directly pertain to pedestrian issues, particularly in regard to the practicality and quality of the pedestrian experience.

Issue 1: Street Connectivity

Article VI of The Town's Subdivision Regulations – DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS - Section 601-603, provide direction regarding the extension of existing streets with new developments and access between adjacent properties.

Sec. 601. Conformity to existing Maps or Plans

The location and width of all proposed streets shall be in conformity with official plans or maps of the Town and with existing or amended plans of the Planning Board.

The plans and maps referred to include the Town Zoning Map and filed subdivision plats approved by the Planning Board.

Sec. 602. Continuation of Adjoining Street System

The proposed street layout shall be coordinated with the street system of the surrounding area and, where possible, existing principal streets shall be extended.

Though direction is given about continuing existing “principal streets”, this term is not defined in the Regulations and is not listed among the eight street classifications under the definition of “STREET”.

Sec. 603. Access to Adjacent Properties

Where in the opinion of the Planning Board, it is desirable to provide for street access to an adjoining property, proposed streets shall be extended by dedication to the boundary of such property and a temporary turn around (cul-de-sac) shall be provided.

Complete discretion is also given to the Planning Board to determine the need for connectivity of properties on a case-by-case basis. It provides no site-specific criteria on which to base such decisions, nor does it refer to any larger guiding plan or policy of the Town regarding streets that are not continuations of existing ones.

Subdivisions (particularly ones in previously undeveloped areas, or "greenfields") are not required to connect to existing streets or to have connections with streets in adjoining lots. Greater street connectivity would increase pedestrian-friendliness by allowing shorter trips and a wider variety of travel paths.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Issue 2: Cul-de-sac Length

The Town presently has no regulations in place to limit cul-de-sac length. Article VI – DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS, Section 611 (h) of the Subdivision Ordinance states:

Sec. 611 Streets and Alleys (h) Cul-de-sacs:

Permanent dead end streets shall be provided with a turn arounds having a roadway diameter of at least eighty (80) feet and a right-of-way diameter of at least one hundred (100) feet. Temporary and dead end streets shall be provided with a turn-around having a radius of at least one-half of the right-of-way of the street.

No other restrictions or guidelines are provided for cul-de-sac design or appropriate use. As cul-de-sacs lengths increase, properties accessible from only one direction become more isolated and difficult to reach, and vehicular traffic on the cul-de-sac increases.

Issue 3: Block Length

Current limits for block length are provided in Article VI – DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS, Section 612 of the Subdivision Ordinance:

Sec. 612. Blocks (a) Length:

Block length shall not exceed twelve hundred (1,200) feet or be less than four hundred (400) feet. Where deemed necessary by the Planning Board, a pedestrian crosswalk at least five (5) feet in width may be required.

Thus, blocks are permitted a length equal to four football fields without any cross-streets. This does not lend itself to a pedestrian-friendly environment for the following reasons:

1. People tend to judge this distance as “too far to walk” before they can turn a corner to get to a parallel street.
2. Long streets without interruption encourage drivers to travel at excessive unsafe speeds.
3. Long blocks present pedestrians with fewer route alternatives.

Issue 4: Sidewalks

The Town presently has no regulations requiring sidewalks. Article VII – INSTALLATION OF IMPROVEMENTS, Section 703 of the Subdivision Ordinance states:

Sec. 703 Installation of Improvements With(in) the Town Limits (b): Sidewalks

Sidewalks shall be constructed on such streets as the Town Board considers sidewalks necessary. Sidewalks shall be constructed within the street right-of-way and installed in accordance with Town Policy.

The language above gives complete discretion to the Town Board to determine the need for sidewalks on a case-by-case basis. It provides no site-specific criteria or Town-wide policy or plan on which to base sidewalk placement. It also provides no standards for sidewalk design, such as required width or provision of planting medians.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

To promote pedestrian-friendly developments, sidewalks should be required in new subdivisions according to a Town-wide pedestrian plan. Furthermore, sidewalks should meet all applicable ADA standards.

Issue 5: Greenways, Trails and Open Space

The only public greenway/walking path in the Norwood area is the circular path at Darrell Almond Park. There currently are no provisions in the Town's regulations for greenways, trails or open space. Norwood has no mechanism in place to secure right-of-way for off-road pedestrian corridors or destination points within the Town limits, or to connect to destinations just outside of Town.

Issue 6: Street Trees

The Town of Norwood Tree Ordinance gives the Town Board the charge of creating an official Street Tree species list and establishing guidelines for spacing street trees.

Section 7. Street Tree Species

The Town Board shall be responsible for an official Street Tree species list comprised of three groups of tree – Small trees, Medium trees, and Large trees. No trees other than those included in the list may be planted as Street Trees without written permission of the Tree Board.

Section 8. Spacing

The Town Board shall be responsible for establishing guidelines for the spacing of town trees in accordance with the three species size classes listed in Section 7 of this ordinance.

To this date, no species list or guidelines for spacing street trees has been adopted.

Without an official list of approved tree species, the Town Board has no objective reference for evaluating developers' tree selections in terms of required size at planting, size at maturity, tree viability, aesthetics, general long-term value of the tree species, or consistency of species within the Town or particular neighborhoods. With no specific guidelines for tree spacing, the Town has no consistent standard for requiring street trees per length of street.

Issue 7: Crosswalks

Placement of crosswalks are mentioned in the Subdivision Ordinance, Article VI – DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STANDARDS, Section 612 within the rule for block lengths:

Sec. 612. Blocks (a) Length:

Block length shall not exceed twelve hundred (1,200) feet or be less than four hundred (400) feet. Where deemed necessary by the Planning Board, a pedestrian crosswalk at least five (5) feet in width may be required.

The language above gives complete discretion to the Planning Board to determine the need for crosswalks on a case-by-case basis. It provides no site-specific criteria on which to base such decisions, nor does it refer to any larger guiding plan or policy of the Town.

Mid-block crosswalks are an effective way of safely channeling pedestrian traffic along major traffic arteries. Crosswalks also offer a secondary pedestrian benefit of calming traffic.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

While there are some crosswalks found in Norwood, their numbers are inadequate for current or projected pedestrian needs.

Issue 8: Off-street Parking

Article X, Section 104 of the Zoning Ordinance sets minimum off-street parking requirements:

Sec. 104. Off-Street Automobile Parking and Storage

“Each automobile parking space shall be not less than two hundred (200) square feet in area exclusive of adequate access drives and maneuvering space. Such space shall be provided with vehicular access to a street or alley, shall not thereafter be encroached upon or altered, and shall be equal in number to at least the minimum requirements for the specific use set forth below:”

The required number of parking spaces is set by building use classification irrespective of zoning districts. Most retail uses, with a few exceptions, are required to provide one space per 200 square feet of gross floor area. The Ordinance sets no limit on maximum number of parking spaces allowed. There is also no requirement that parking lots be paved.

Parking lots have a significant impact on the pedestrian-friendliness of a community. The following issues are particularly relevant for pedestrian planning:

1. Requiring off-street parking for all uses in a downtown inadvertently conflicts with the pedestrian nature of a "downtown." These areas should be designed to facilitate the movement of persons by foot, as well as by car. Most zoning ordinances either waive or significantly limit the amount of off-street parking required in a downtown setting, or give credit for on-street spaces.
2. The one space/200 square foot standard (which the ordinance calls for) has been found in most instances to be excessive. In an effort to reduce the "sea of asphalt" phenomenon, there has been a trend to lower the number of required parking spaces for retail uses and to reduce the required area of each space. Some ordinances set a *maximum* parking requirement rather than a minimum.
3. Current standards for a typical full-size parking space area usually allows a space width of nine feet and a depth of 18 feet, for a total area of 162 square feet. Such a reduction significantly reduces the size of parking lots while still comfortably accomodating larger privately-owned vehicles.
4. Unpaved parking lots do not easily accommodate pedestrians.

Issue 9: Building Setbacks

Article VII, Section 75 of the Zoning Ordinance lists minimum yard requirements including front yard setbacks for all zoning districts. The Ordinance sets no maximum setback, which means buildings can be located at great distances from the street.

Excessive building setbacks are disadvantageous and even problematic to towns for a number of reasons involving safety, economic vitality, and general pedestrian friendliness. With no regulations to establish maximum setbacks (or "build-to" lines), retailers can create very deep front yards to accommodate their off-street parking entirely in the front yard.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Such strip-development arrangement deteriorates street definition, making pedestrian use uncomfortable.

On the other hand, minimal setbacks provide the following advantages:

1. **Safety.** Buildings set far back from streets most often require visitors on foot to navigate significant distances through parked cars (and moving ones!) in parking lots to reach their desired destination point – an often unsafe experience for pedestrians.
2. **Good business.** Buildings in a central business district are ideally built with little or no front yard setback. Businesses built close to the street offer pedestrians opportunity to “window-shop” or walk into a business immediately from the sidewalk.
3. **Comfort.** Streets with minimum setbacks are usually more inviting to walk in. This phenomenon is largely due to a sense of enclosure that buildings can impart to a street, along with the lack of large, hot expanses of asphalt. Buildings close to the street help make the street viable and interesting public space rather than the vast, open no-man’s land often found with strip development.

Issue 10: Mixed Land Use

Section 50 of the Zoning Ordinance defines eleven Use Districts. None of these Districts permit a mix of residential and non-residential uses together in the same district. Thus, land uses for the most part are segregated.

The segregation of land uses does not encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment. The physical distance between uses presents fewer opportunities for pedestrians to walk from one use to another (i.e. "being able to walk to the corner store.") Such an arrangement more often necessitates the use of a car. All too often, such scenarios lend themselves to "strip commercial" development along major highways, which are geared for the motorist as opposed to the pedestrian.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

The Norwood Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is currently under development by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Transportation Planning Branch. It is due for publication by Spring of 2007. The Plan will include the development, testing and evaluation of alternate transportation plans that considered Town goals and objectives, and identified deficiencies, environmental impacts, and existing and anticipated land development and travel patterns. The CTP will address roadway, public transportation, and bike improvements in order to meet the future mobility needs of the Town of Norwood in the coming decades.

The Stanly County Land Use Plan

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

The most current County Land Use Plan was adopted in 2002. This “community driven” Plan encourages for its primary growth areas (municipalities) mixed land use patterns, traditional neighborhood design, and public institutions to serve as the focus for communities. The Plan defines Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) as...

“...a pattern of development and design that provides neighborhoods that are walkable in scale and mixed in use. This walkability is a result of an interconnected street network, streets with sidewalks and street trees, and smaller residential setbacks; while a mix of uses results from residential uses being located “above the store” on the second floor. It is the model for most cities, towns, and other population centers in Stanly County before World War II.”

Below are some of the land use principles identified in the Plan and how they relate to the Town of Norwood specifically.

1. Future growth and development should be directed to the county’s existing population centers.

The Plan reports that the small-town, rural atmosphere indicative of Stanly County is one of its most attractive features. Residents of Stanly County generally agreed that it would be impossible and undesirable to stop growth, but questioned how new development could be managed in order to preserve the unique qualities that define the County’s rural and urban areas. Western Stanly County is already beginning to see “rural sprawl” occur, that is, scattered, unsystematic growth away from existing population centers. The Plan charges municipalities to work together to minimize sprawl in the countryside. Historically, development patterns in the region focused on the small cities and towns, and today this is still the most advantageous pattern, in terms of economic use of existing infrastructure, preservation of farmland and rural scenery, and in the ability of existing communities to absorb and sustain new development with the least amount of public investment. According to the Plan, existing municipal road systems designed on a grid pattern are the most easily expandable and can accommodate greater influxes of traffic, particularly during peak times.

4. Protect Stanly County’s unique natural and cultural resources.

Norwood’s Lake Tillery shoreline has been identified as part of a valuable countywide asset, and should be protected as a cultural resource worthy of preservation.

5. Use long-range planning for public infrastructure investments as an opportunity for community building.

Along with zoning and land use planning, the availability of services and infrastructure such as schools, public utilities, and roads are among the most effective tools for guiding and concentrating development within the Town.

6. Encourage land use patterns that provide a compact mix of land uses at a higher intensity of development.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

In Norwood, or any town in the region, the traditional land use pattern is still visible, where residential neighborhoods are located in close proximity of older commercial areas, along with libraries, schools, churches, etc. This type of development pattern encourages pedestrian circulation for routine daily activities and could conceivably reduce dependence upon vehicles particularly for school commuting, trips to parks and recreation facilities, and daily shopping and service needs.

7. The provision of parks, recreation, and open space needs to be an element of future land use planning in Stanly County.

Among the other benefits of parks and open space, these lands can provide valuable pedestrian linkages between schools, residential neighborhoods, retail and services, and active and passive recreation areas themselves.

9. Cooperation between the County, its communities, and other entities offers the best solution to future land use planning in the County.

The objectives of the Land Use Plan cannot be met without the involvement and cooperation of its municipalities. Preserving land and preventing rural sprawl will not be possible without the cooperation of the County's municipalities avoiding expansion of utilities and other urban services beyond its urban area. The Plan recommends that towns adopt comprehensive/land use plans and continue coordinated plan dialog with the County.

The Plan also underscores the importance of a **Rocky River Greenway**:

“The Rocky River presents a unique opportunity to link southern Stanly County with a regional greenway to Cabarrus, Mecklenburg and Union Counties and the Charlotte metropolitan area. A multi-purpose greenway is recommended for this corridor; a greenway that ultimately would link to the Yadkin-Pee Dee River at Norwood... (and) serve as a linear park with trails and infrastructure supporting walking, biking, canoeing and other activities.”

The County Land Use Plan also recognizes other regional planning documents, such as the North Carolina Central Park Study, which corroborate many of the planning strategies of the County Plan, particularly with respect to urban growth patterns.

North Carolina Central Park Study (Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project)

The Yadkin-Pee Dee Lake Project encompasses seven counties joined by the Yadkin-Pee Dee River, including Stanly County. The Project is particularly concerned with the region's potential for developing a significant tourism economy based on its natural and cultural assets. The Central Park Study was commissioned with the idea that the region could become the "Central Park" of the Carolinas, serving as a rural hub for outdoor recreation and tourism for local residents and the growing urban population surrounding the region. The Study identifies a number of priorities particularly for its urban centers, such as the Town of Norwood and recommends the following:

Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project

- Create communities rather than “developments”.
- Ensure the economic vitality of existing small communities before allowing stand alone or strip commercial or residential development.
- Set aside monies for public open space.
- Support master planning and creation of definitive town images and boundaries.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

3. Pedestrian Programs, Events and Initiatives:

Norwood hosts a number of **annual events** that draw crowds of participants on foot. Among them:

- **Horse Trials** – The first two weeks in April, this regional equestrian event is held on Fork Farm, at the end of Fork Road.
- **Arbor Day** – Norwood celebrates a two-day festival in the Town Hall on the last weekend in April. This event draws about 7500 pedestrians for food, arts and crafts, entertainment, dancing, and (of course) tree planting. Over eighty vendor spaces are hosted by civic clubs, churches, and other community groups.
- **Car Show** – Immediately following the Arbor Day festival, Norwood holds its annual car show in the softball field on Turner Street. The event includes live music, food, and lots of show cars.
- **Picnic in the Park** – Darrell Almond Community Park's autumn event features lots of live music and food.
- **Little League Baseball** – These regular events for boys and girls draw crowds to the field at Turner drive.

The **Norwood Police Department** currently has no pedestrian programs in place, but they do assist with the annual Walk-a-Kid-to-School event. About 100 kids participate each year.

The **Neighborhood Watch Program** is reportedly coming soon to Norwood. Programs like these help make communities safer for homeowners and for pedestrians.

As a member government of the **Rocky River Rural Planning Organization (RRRPO)**, the Town of Norwood participates in transportation planning initiatives for the region, and enjoys the benefits and resources available through the RRRPO. One of those benefits has been assistance in applying for the North Carolina Department of Transportation Pedestrian Planning Grant that funded the development of this Pedestrian Plan.

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Section 6: Key Areas & Issues

As it exists today, Norwood has a number of features that visibly help make the Town a pleasant place for pedestrians. Sidewalks line the main streets in the Town center. Awnings shade many building entrances. Street trees dot the downtown pedestrian ways adding shade, beauty, separation from vehicles, and a sense of pedestrian scale.

Other pedestrian-friendly elements in the Town may be less obvious but have an even more profound impact on Norwood's walkability. These features deserve the spotlight in order that their value can be more clearly understood, so that they will be preserved, enhanced and drawn upon as the Town continues to develop.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

1. **Compact urban core with a variety of land uses and destination points**

Norwood has the benefit of a fairly compact urban form, centered along Main Street. The majority of the Town's community buildings and services, along with businesses, restaurants and residential neighborhoods are within an easy five-minute walking distance of this central spine.

2. **Existing tight-knit well-connected community**

The existing grid of streets on either side of Main Street provides a relatively well-connected network for vehicles as well as pedestrians. This means people can visit a variety of destinations on the same walking trip, and do so in a fairly efficient manner, without having to walk very far out of their way. It also means pedestrians can stroll between points by a variety of paths without always having to walk the same tedious route.

3. **Large, under-developed parcels within the Town**

Norwood's fairly dense core of neighborhoods is nearly surrounded by large tracts of under-developed land. These parcels present prime opportunities for development, and give the Town enormous opportunity to shape its future. Such large parcels will face increasing development pressure as the area becomes increasingly desirable to potential residents attracted to Norwood's assets, particularly its lake frontage.

4. **Lake Tillery**

Lake frontage has traditionally drawn part-time residents to Norwood from populated areas like Charlotte. Many of those vacation homes along the Lake have turned into year-around residencies. As the population of the region grows, lake towns like Norwood will become ever more desirable. Public access points, such as Canal Park, increase the value of the Lake for all citizens of Norwood.

5. **Darrell Almond Community Park**

The Park draws residents of all ages for recreation, exercise, events and informal social gatherings. It also serves as a landmark for Norwood to those traveling through Town on Highway 52. Darrell Almond Park combines a circular walking path around an expansive pond, with a ball field, picnic shelters, a fenced

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

playground, restrooms, vending machines, a tree-lined stream, and seating areas. The Park occupies a strategic location in Town, linking Main Street to a primary stream corridor of Lake Tillery. This Community Park lies adjacent to established residential neighborhoods, retail businesses, and to land that is now prime for redevelopment (former Jones Fabrics).

6. Existing sidewalk network

Norwood's existing sidewalk system already connects many key destination points to surrounding neighborhoods. This established centralized network provides a main spine from which other sidewalk lengths could branch out to more destinations.

7. Existing streams and sewer easements

The various tributaries of Lake Tillery that run through Norwood provide excellent potential for greenway paths. Such off-road paths could serve as a transportation network complementary to sidewalks, and provide recreational opportunities as well.

PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN ISSUES

The factors that determine overall pedestrian quality of life for a community are numerous and interwoven. But in order to make conscious improvements to pedestrian conditions, the individual component issues must be identified and understood. Solving complex pedestrian issues requires an understanding of the major trends that led to current conditions, and that will continue to shape the future. The following represents a summarization of issues and needs that are addressed by the Norwood Pedestrian Plan Recommendations.

1. Vehicular traffic

Traffic conditions along Highway 52 - Norwood's Main Street – present an increasing challenge. The Town's busiest pedestrian corridor is also its most heavily trafficked by cars and trucks, including heavy industrial trucks. Many favor a bypass around Norwood for through traffic, but such a project may still lie many years in the future.

2. Safety concerns

With the heavy volume of through traffic traveling along Main Street, some of its intersections are becoming a growing concern in terms of pedestrian safety. Other streets within Town having long, straight sections, are also a growing safety concern.

3. Current development trends

As the region's population grows, so will demands upon its natural recreational assets. Norwood's Lake Tillery frontage will continue to draw new residents and visitors. Development pressures will rise, making the sale of larger tracts in Town increasingly more attractive. Large undeveloped or redevelopable tracts in Town need more focused planning.

4. Current development policy

NORWOOD PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Land use plans, policies, and ordinances, which are the Town's primary tools for development, are not fully consistent with and do not explicitly support the Town's pedestrian vision. In some cases they may even work against it. Future patterns of development in Norwood will follow the guidelines set forth in these documents. If Norwood is to become a town more attractive to and safer for pedestrians, and less congested with vehicles, current development policy must be carefully scrutinized and amended with these goals in mind.

5. Current Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks are needed to accommodate pedestrian traffic in many corridors throughout town where they are currently not available. Norwood also has very little to offer in terms of off-road paths and trails.

6. Available funds

Pedestrian improvements like sidewalks and street trees cost money. But many other important infrastructure needs compete for local tax revenue as well. However, specific funding sources are available that are targeted solely at pedestrian streetscape improvements. Also, the cost of many pedestrian improvements could be absorbed by private development in the Town as that development occurs. The funding question relates directly to how high a standard the Town is willing to require of new development within the Town.

7. Familiarity with choices in urban form

Many people are simply unfamiliar with various forms a community's development can potentially take or how those particular forms may potentially encourage or discourage pedestrian life. People who have never personally experienced otherwise often assume the absolute necessity of automobiles for all facets of modern community life. Many citizens are also unfamiliar with how particular development patterns come about, and underestimate the power their community has to shape its own future development. It is the intention of this Pedestrian Plan to convey these options in urban form and describe the means of improving pedestrian conditions in Norwood, and with those improvements, to see the increased civic and economic vitality of the Town itself.